

Congressman Ron Kind's Progress Agenda for Working Families

JOBS AND WAGES

Provide job training and employment services: The President's FY07 budget eliminates \$54 million in funding for job training and employment services, including programs for adults and youth and creates unaccountable and un-tested "Career Advancement Accounts. In addition to his efforts to support such training services, Rep. Kind has introduced HR 2325 to direct the National Science Foundation to establish a competitive grant program for institutions of higher education to enhance education and job training opportunities in mathematics, science, engineering, and technology.

Increase the minimum wage: Family income has dropped by \$3,888 since 2000, while health care and energy prices are climbing. Rep. Kind believes we must increase the minimum wage to ensure that workers and their families can keep up with the rising cost of living and have an opportunity to attain the American Dream.

Support labor rights: Numerous incidents have come to light in recent years outlining an increase in intimidation of employees who seek to form unions and bargain collectively. Rep. Kind believes employees should be able to freely and voluntarily choose union representation, which is why he an original cosponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act. This legislation would help employees exercise their free choice to form a union without employers coercing employee opinion.

Ensure worker safety: The budget cuts \$250 million from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Cutting the NIOSH budget undermines the country's efforts to prevent workplace injuries, diseases, and deaths. The U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics found that worker deaths increased in 2004, for the first time in 10 years.

Promote job-creating economic growth: Since President Bush took office, 77,400 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Wisconsin, with 147,807 people currently looking for a job. **The House**

Democrats' Innovation Agenda: Due to the great concern for our economy and our place in the world, the House Democrats came up with the comprehensive plan and commitment to reinvigorate the public-private partnerships that have generated so much of the economic growth and innovation in our country that have created good paying American jobs. **A.** Educate 100,000 new scientists, engineers and mathematics in four years. **B.** Increased commitment to Research and Development by doubling overall funding for basic research. **C.** Accessible and affordable broadband to all Americans within five years. **D.** Energy Independence within ten years. **E.** Strengthen entrepreneurs and small businesses so they can continue to contribute to America's greatest innovations.

HEALTH CARE

Address the nation's health care crisis: There are 566,000 people without health insurance in Wisconsin, an increase of 160,000 since 2000. This year, the FY07 Republican budget eliminates \$99 million in preventive and community health funding nationwide. In addition, the Bush budget cuts Medicare by \$36 billion over the next five years, resulting in \$297 million in cuts to hospitals, nursing homes, and home health providers serving seniors and people with disabilities in Wisconsin. Rep. Kind believes we need to take action on improving our nation's healthcare system, increaing access, quality and affordability.

Provide affordable healthcare options for workers: The lack of affordable health insurance is hurting our working families, independent farmers, and small businesses. To offer affordable and quality healthcare options for employers and their employees, Kind has authored the Small Employer and Family Farmer Health Benefits Act (HR 1955). This bill would allow small businesses to pool together in buying insurance, decrease the number of the uninsured, and extend tax credits to certain employers. Kind also has consistently opposed the Republican proposals to establish “association” health plans (AHP).

Ensure quality rural health care: The healthcare needs of rural areas are great and deserve additional resources and attention. As a steering committee member of the Rural Health Care Coalition, Rep. Kind has been instrumental in assuring that quality care is available in rural hospitals and clinics and rural areas are able to attract doctors, nurses, and other health professionals.

EDUCATION & JOB TRAINING

Honor promises to fully fund education: Over the past five years, the Republican budget has shortchanged the No Child Left Behind Act by a total of \$55 billion nationwide. This year’s budget also provides \$115 million less for children with disabilities in Wisconsin than promised. As a member of the Budget and the Education and Workforce Committees, Kind strongly supports fully funding NCLB and other critical education programs such as IDEA. Kind also supports increasing flexibility with NCLB to help with implementation of the law at the local level.

Stop the raid on student aid: President Bush signed a Republican budget bill which cut \$12 billion from student aid programs—the largest single cut ever. Instead of passing this raid on student aid, Kind believes that Congress should have adopted Democratic ideas for making college more affordable without costing taxpayers a dime or adding to the budget deficit. Specifically, Kind and Democrats wanted to eliminate excessive subsidies paid to lenders in the student loan industry and use the savings to make loans more affordable and increase Pell grant scholarship for low-income students.

Making college more affordable: Today’s college students are graduating with an average debt of \$17,500. Among several things, Kind supports lowering the student loan interest rates for students, increasing the Pell grant to keep pace with inflation, protecting Campus-Based Aid for Wisconsin students.

Invest in math and science education: Rep. Kind believes America must do more to make Americans employable in 21st century jobs by putting greater emphasis on student achievement in science, technology, engineering and math education (STEM) fields. Kind’s legislation (HR 2325) would provide students with more opportunities in these areas and give them the tools and skills they need to compete in the today’s economy.

Support student job training programs: The Bush budget cuts \$22 million in vocational education funding in Wisconsin, which has played a critical role in preparing students at high schools and community colleges for today’s job market. Kind strongly supports retaining this critical funding and ensuring the resources are available to prepare students for a competitive job marketplace.

RETIREMENT SECURITY

Strengthen Social Security: Social Security is the nation’s most successful family program – currently there are 940,000 people in Wisconsin receiving monthly benefits. Rep. Kind is committed to strengthening Social Security in a way that ensures a hardworking American’s right to a secure retirement. Kind also believes in strengthening personal retirement savings in this country. Private savings accounts such as IRAs and 401(k)s work well for millions of Americans as a complement to the basic benefit provided by Social Security, but these should be created in addition to Social Security, not in place of it.

Act on pension reform: The House and Senate have passed different versions of pension reform legislation, and the two bodies will meet in conference committee to iron out the differences. Kind has spearheaded efforts in Congress demanding appropriate flexibility for multiemployer plans, equity between workers and executives, and the preservation of shutdown benefits.

TAXES & BUDGETING

Demand Tax Fairness: While the national debt has increased to over \$8 trillion, the Administration has promised \$3.9 trillion in tax cuts over the next decade, the majority of which will go to high-income households. Rep. Kind is a strong advocate for tax fairness and supports measures to ease the burden on working families, maintaining the child tax credit and fixing the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT). The AMT was meant originally to apply to the top tax bracket only; however, because it has not been adjusted for inflation, it impacts more and more middle income earners every year.

Balance the Budget: America must get its fiscal house in order and return to the days of responsible budgeting. As a member of the Budget Committee, Rep. Kind has consistently worked to balance the budget in a fiscally responsible way; however, Congress has voted for three debt increases since 2000, totaling \$2.2 trillion. Kind also believes Congress must reinstate “pay as you go” rules requiring tax cuts and spending be offset in the budget before they are approved.